

# Southend-On-Sea Drugs and Alcohol Strategy

April 2023 – March 2025



Mid and South Essex  
Integrated Care  
System



**ESSEX  
POLICE**

Protecting and serving Essex

Probation  
Service



**Southend-on-Sea**  
City Council

# Contents

Foreword .....	2
.....	2
Our Vision.....	3
Executive Summary .....	4
Background and context .....	5
Our Priorities .....	7
Priority 1 – Prevention and Early Intervention	7
Priority 2 – Reducing Drug-related Deaths.	8
Priority 3 – improving support for those in the criminal justice system.	9
Priority 4 – Reducing drug and alcohol related crime.	10
Priority 5 – Improving treatment outcomes.	11
Priority 6 – Adopting a place-based approach to building recovery into communities.....	12
How we will work together.....	13
How we will know we are successful .....	14

*"I have valued having input into the council strategy and enjoyed getting feedback. The shadow board that I am a part of setting up will enlighten other people who have not had lived experience and they will be better able to understand the needs of people with addiction. I have now become a mentor and volunteer support worker which will lead onto fulltime employment."*

***Ian, Southend Resident with Lived Experience***

# Foreword

Misusing drugs and alcohol causes significant harm. Not only is it associated with poor mental and physical health, but it is also closely linked with experiences of trauma, involvement in the criminal justice system and domestic violence. It has a considerable impact on families, children, and the wider community, with those living in more disadvantaged communities being much more likely to be affected.

Across Southend, we have high rates of drug-related deaths, high levels of alcohol-related hospital attendances and a high level of criminality associated with the misuse of these substances; all of which have a significant negative impact on childhood, the lives of young people and families as well as the individual impact on people's health and wellbeing, now and later in life.

For these reasons, it is imperative that public sector bodies, schools, families and community groups, work together to tackle the harmful impact of drugs and alcohol. We all need to recognise how the misuse of these substances permeate our homes, schools, workplaces, and communities, and play a more active part to collectively tackle these challenges.

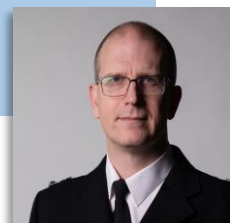


*Krishna Ramkhelawon, Director of Public Health, Southend City Council*

Misuse of drugs and alcohol is a significant factor in the causes of crime and anti-social behaviour. Violence in our public and private spaces, safety on our roads and perceptions of safety in our communities are all too frequently linked to taking drugs or to overconsumption of alcohol. Police patrols and enforcement activity can make a difference, but by themselves they cannot achieve a long-term change in individual behaviour or address all the harm substance abuse brings about. A partnership approach is needed.

The national 'From Harm, to Hope' strategy, and the associated investment, gives us the opportunity to improve services in Southend and to reduce drug and alcohol related harm. By working in partnership across the local authority, health, education, voluntary and criminal justice sectors we can make sure that our investment and our energy goes towards those things that will make the greatest difference. Essex Police is pleased to be part of a Southend partnership that seeks to reduce the demand for illegal drugs, that seeks to tackle their supply, especially the violence and harm that comes with the scourge of drug lines, and that seeks to improve treatment and recovery services. Working together, I'm convinced we can make things better for our city.

*Chief Superintendent Simon Anslow, Head of Operational Policing and Command, Essex Police*

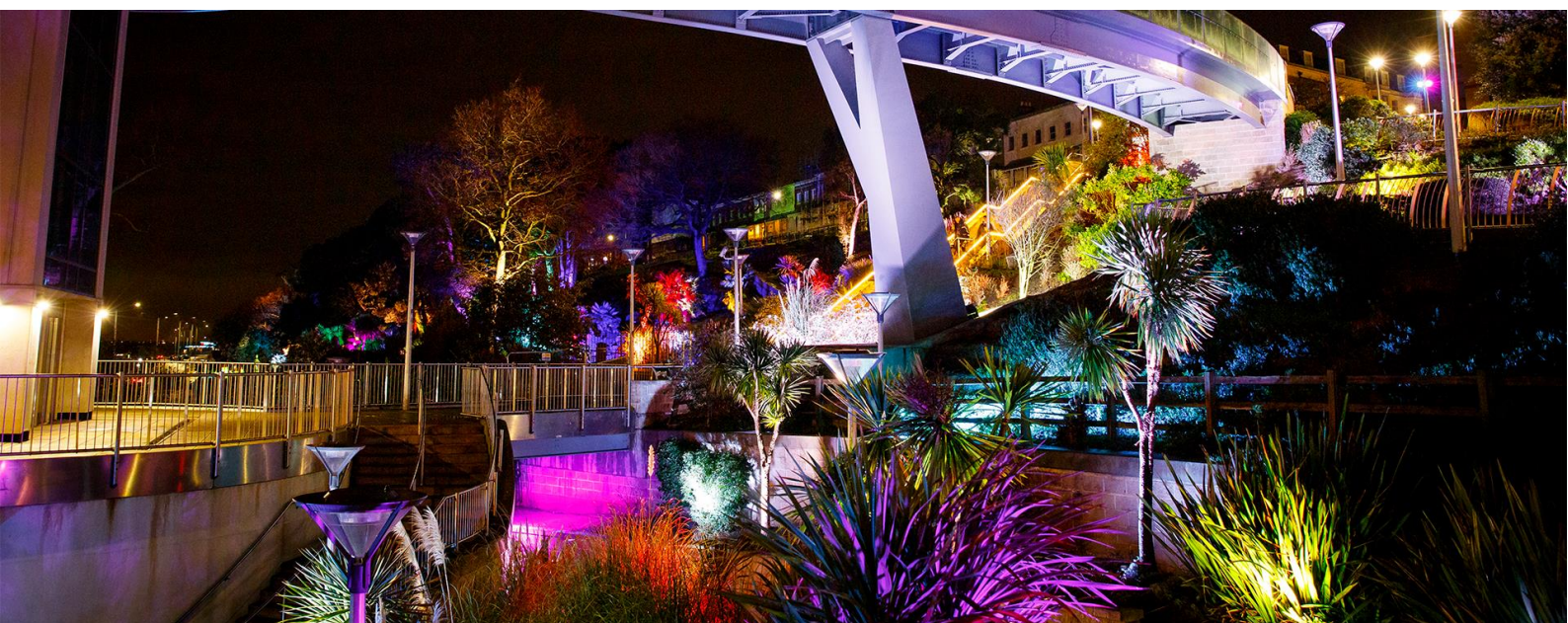


# Our Vision

**Our vision is for Southend-On-Sea to be a place where people feel safe, connected and well, and where they can live happy and prosperous lives free from the harms caused by drugs and alcohol. We want people to have the best possible physical and mental health, to be able to make informed choices and have control over their health and wellbeing. This means creating an environment where:**

- People are empowered to make positive changes and to avoid using substances to cope with adversity and stress.
- Our children and families have the best start in life and are protected from the harmful affects of drugs and alcohol as they grow and age.
- We have compassionate communities which support resilience and recovery.
- We have person-centred, responsive services which see people as individuals and take the time to listen to, and learn from, their experiences.
- Our workforce feels empowered and takes a trauma-informed approach to providing treatment, care and support, recognising the wider factors which feed into harmful substance use.
- We have an improved shared understanding of the local drugs markets and work in partnership to take action against individuals and groups who are willingly concerned in the production and supply of illegal drugs.

This strategy aims to provide a framework for achieving this vision, drawing upon national and local evidence and an understanding of local need, to outline the context, the partnership approach we are committed to, and the strategic priorities we wish to focus on for the next 2 years.



# Executive Summary

Working with residents, users of treatment and recovery services, professionals, and wider stakeholders, we have developed six priorities for tackling the harms of drugs and alcohol in Southend:

- 1) Prevention and early intervention**
- 2) Reducing drug-related deaths**
- 3) Reducing drug and alcohol related crime**
- 4) Improving support for those involved in the criminal justice system.**
- 5) Improving treatment outcomes**
- 6) Adopting a place-based approach to building recovery into communities**

Tackling the harms from drugs and alcohol is everyone's business, so underpinning these priorities are also a set of key principles which we believe will help us to achieve our vision.

## Growing and developing our workforce

- We will ensure we build an effective, trained and well supported workforce, to enable them to provide the best possible services to those who need it.

## Embedding co-production and harnessing the strengths of the third sector

- We will work with the local third sector and southend residents to co-produce local solutions, building on the strengths and assets in communities to ensure resilience and strong recovery capital.

## Working together to plan services and support

- We will ensure that we work in a collaborative way, with a range of different partners, to ensure actions and outcomes align, and that each partner feels they are able to contribute to the priorities and actions within the strategy.

## Taking an outcomes focused approach

- We will take an outcomes focussed approach: not just focussing on the actions we need to take, but on what this looks and feels like for individuals. We will work with local people in co-production to develop outcome measures which are reflective of the needs of our local communities.

**Together, these priorities and principles will drive our collective action over the next 2 years.**

The harms of drugs and alcohol can be felt by anyone, at any stage in life, and if not addressed, go on to affect the health and wellbeing of individuals and families, the safety of communities, and the economic growth and prosperity of our city.

In 2021, the UK Government published its 10-year drugs strategy, '[From Harm to Hope: a 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives](#)' following Dame Carol Black's Independent Review of Drugs ([Parts 1 & 2](#)). The Dame Carol Black review has been influential in pushing the drug treatment agenda forward, articulating unmet need and gaining Government backing including a considerable increase in funding for drug and alcohol treatment.

Outlined in the 10-year drugs strategy are three strategic priorities which, through the development of local combating drugs partnerships, we are required to work towards locally:

## 1 - Break Drug Supply Chains

- Break the ability of gangs to supply drugs wholesale to neighbourhood dealers
- Make it harder for organised crime groups to operate by disrupting operations and seizing cash
- Tackle county lines by bringing perpetrators to justice, safeguarding and supporting victims, and reducing violence and homicide
- better target local drug gangs and street dealing
- Reducing violence and exploitation and protect our prison populations.

## 2 - Deliver a world-class treatment and recovery system

- Improve quality, capacity and outcomes of commissioned services
- Rebuild the professional workforce
- Ensure better integration of services
- Improve access to accommodation and employment opportunities alongside treatment
- increase referrals into treatment in the criminal justice system
- keep those that have been in prison engaged in treatment after release

## 3 - Achieve a generational shift in the demand for drugs

- Build a better evidence base to test and learn and drive change
- Ensure local pathways to identify and change behaviour of people involved in activities caused by drug-related harm
- deliver school-based prevention and early intervention
- support young people and families most at risk of substance misuse
- apply tougher and more meaningful consequences for those in possession of illegal drugs

Successfully addressing drug use and supply in a local area requires a range of organisations to work together to tackle this issue based on local needs<sup>1</sup>. In November 2022, Southend-On-Sea City Council published a [substance misuse needs assessment](#) to explore the impact of substance misuse on the population, including a review of current provision for both adults and children and young people and identification of gaps in service provision.

The key findings of this needs assessment highlighted that in Southend:



The direct negative impact of alcohol appears to be lower than for other comparable areas, however, around a quarter of the population in the UK are estimated to drink above recommended levels.



Among secondary school pupils, rates of alcohol consumption increase dramatically when compared to primary school, with just 41% indicating that they have never had alcohol and 15% of young people reporting drinking alcohol sometimes or once a week (compared to 83% of year 6 pupils reporting not drinking within past 7 days).



The proportion of people in treatment aged 50 or over has increased from 11% in 2009/10 to 25% in 2020/21.



While over 1/3 of people successfully complete treatment, around half of the people in treatment dropped out or left treatment. Successful completion of treatment has been declining over several years.



Drug-related deaths are significantly higher than both the England and East of England averages.



Residents are concerned about drug and alcohol use across and believe that this is a growing issue across the city.



Treatment for young people is broadly effective, with 90% of young people successfully completing, and 48% leaving treatment drug free.



There is a lack of knowledge and understanding of substance misuse among children and young people, with 38% of year 8 and 10 students stating that it is safe to use cannabis

Using the findings of this needs assessment, a series of engagement events have been held to develop local priorities and ensure that our plans to address the priorities in the national strategy, are informed by an understanding of local needs, resources and assets. This has included:

- Interviews with professional stakeholders as part of the needs assessment activities
- Qualitative engagement with 16 service users
- Residents survey receiving 78 responses to gather local perceptions.
- 1 Needs assessment consultation event.
- 2 wider stakeholder engagement events.
- Liaison with our regional leads from the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities

<sup>1</sup> [Guidance for Local Delivery Partners \(2022\) - Guidance for local delivery partners FINAL.pdf](#)

## Priority 1 – Prevention and Early Intervention

### What do we know?

Around 1/4 of the population in England and Wales drink above recommended levels, increasing the risks for a range of long-term health conditions and wider social impacts

in 2021/22, 22% adults who were new to drug treatment, and 34% adults new to treatment for alcohol use in Southend, were either parents or living with children

An estimated 27,000 young people have been pulled into the drugs trade nationally

15% of secondary school children in Southend report drinking alcohol sometimes or once a week

In a recent survey, 38% of Year 8 and 10 students stated that it was safe to use cannabis

Residents are concerned about drug and alcohol use and believe that this is a growing issue across the city.

### How will we tackle these challenges?

- We will explore the feasibility of implementing a population-wide alcohol identification and brief advice intervention to enable residents to receive opportunistic screening, advice, and signposting.
- We will conduct a review of current delivery of the drugs and alcohol curriculum in schools to support improvements in the coverage and quality of teaching about substance misuse.
- We will better coordinate our messaging to residents, developing a mechanism of ongoing community engagement and feedback to understand and address issues, build upon strengths and assets and shape service development.
- We will work to improve the support for young people and families affected by substance misuse, through commissioning a targeted service to work with social care and other partners to reduce risk, address wider social factors and support families to access treatment where appropriate.

### How will this contribute to achieving the national priorities?

#### Priority 1 - Break Drug Supply Chains

- Reducing exploitation through better and more targeted work with children and young people and families
- Improving targeting of local gangs and street dealing through facilitating better relationships and dialogue with residents and community groups

#### Priority 3 - Create a generational shift in the demand for drugs.

- Delivering school-based prevention and early intervention
- Supporting young people and families most at risk



## Priority 2 – Reducing Drug-related Deaths.

### What do we know?

Nationally, drug-related deaths are at an all time high, and have been increasing year on year.

In Southend, the rate of drug related deaths in 2018-20 was 5.7 per 100,000 population, significantly higher than the England average of 5 per 100,000 and the East of England rate of 3.7 per 100,000.

There were 23 recorded drug and alcohol related deaths in Southend in 2020

There is no shared process in place in Southend for monitoring and learning from drug and alcohol related deaths

Nationally, data indicates the highest number of rough sleepers dying from drug poisoning since records began.

There has been a 23% increase in deaths in people in treatment for opiates when comparing 2019-20 to 2021-22.

### How will we tackle these challenges?

- We will enhance harm reduction provision by increasing the distribution of Naloxone\* and breadth of access points across Southend.
- We will increase the number of adults in structured treatment through increasing the capacity within our treatment service, and working in collaboration with our treatment provider and wider partners to improve pathways and engagement with treatment
- We will establish a local process for recording, monitoring, and sharing learning from drug and alcohol related deaths and near misses in Southend.
- We will establish a multi-agency panel to oversee this process and coordinate the dissemination of learning and actions to relevant partners.

### How will this contribute to achieving the national priorities?

#### Priority 1 - Deliver a world-class treatment and recovery system.

- Contribute to improving the quality, capacity, and outcomes of service delivery.
- Supporting better integration between services through shared learning and multi-agency review of deaths
- Contribute to reversing the national upward trend in drug-related deaths.

\*Naloxone is the emergency antidote for overdoses caused by heroin and other opiates or opioids (such as methadone, morphine and fentanyl) - [Widening the availability of naloxone - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/widening-the-availability-of-naloxone)

## Priority 3 – improving support for those in the criminal justice system.

### What do we know?

Nationally, it is estimated that over 1/3 of the prison population are there for drugs-related crimes, with 60% of these serving sentences for crimes related to drug addiction

Out of 490 referrals into treatment in Southend in 2021/22, 12% were made via the criminal justice system

Southend has a higher proportion of criminal justice clients in treatment for opiates (19%), when compared to the National average (16%) (2020/21)

Only a third of people referred for community treatment after release go on to receive it within three weeks

### How will we tackle these challenges?

- We will improve early assessment of individuals going through police custody to promote engagement with community treatment post-release.
- We will develop pathways of support following the implementation of drug-test on arrest to ensure those testing positive for drugs receive appropriate sentencing and treatment support.
- We will increase residential treatment places for offenders with complex needs.
- We will increase the use of diversionary schemes and out of court disposals where appropriate.
- Supported by additional investment in capacity in 2022/23, will work to embed and strengthen joint posts between specialist treatment services and criminal justice.
- We will work with Essex and Thurrock to improve our relationships with local prison's, to improve pathways and partnership working.

### How will this contribute to achieving the national priorities?

#### Priority 2 - Deliver a world-class treatment and recovery system.

- Increase referrals into treatment via the criminal justice system.
- keep those that have been in prison engaged in treatment after release.
- Ensure better integration of services.

## Priority 4 – Reducing drug and alcohol related crime.

### What do we know?

In 2022, there were 619 drug offences recorded in Southend with 27% being drug trafficking offences and 73% for the possession of drugs

Since 2014, drug-related offending has consistently been highest in Kursaal, Milton, Southchurch and Victoria wards.

It is estimated that 59,900 crimes can be prevented by engaging individuals in Southend drug and alcohol treatment

### How will we tackle these challenges?

- We will assess the feasibility of implementing Turnaround or Op Novice approach in Southend to support whole family interventions with young people.
- We will increase the number of major and moderate disruptions against activities or organised crime group involved in the production and/or supply of controlled drugs.
- We will target the highest threat drugs lines operating in Southend (assessed through [MORiLE framework](#)) to achieve an overall reduction in the risk presented by such lines.
- We will reduce the supply and use of class A drugs in the night-time economy by increasing the number of drug tests on arrest where class A drugs are expected to have been taken

### How will this contribute to achieving the national priorities?

#### Priority 1 - Break Drug Supply Chains

- Make it harder for organised crime groups to operate by disrupting operations and seizing cash.
- Better target local drug gangs and street dealing

#### Priority 3 - Achieve a Generational Shift in the Demand for Drugs

- support young people and families most at risk of substance misuse
- apply tougher and more meaningful consequences for those in possession of illegal drugs

## Priority 5 – Improving treatment outcomes.

### What do we know?

Successful completion of treatment for opiate users has declined steeply since 2019, and rates in Southend are now lower than both the East of England and England rates.

There is an ageing treatment population: the proportion of people in treatment in Southend aged 50+ has increased from 11% in 2009/10 to 25% in 2020/21

There has been a decline in the number of people in treatment for substance misuse in Southend over the past 10 years.

It is estimated that 60% of opiate and crack cocaine users in Southend are not in treatment

10% of people in treatment in Southend in 2020/21 were recorded as having a housing problem

65% of the treatment population in Southend were unemployed or economically inactive in 2020/21

### How will we tackle these challenges?

- We will conduct a review of the non-opiate and opiate pathways to understand the barriers to accessing treatment and identify local actions for improvement.
- Supported by recruitment undertaken in 2022/23, we will increase the number of adults and young people in structured treatment.
- We will work with Forward Trust to ensure good pathways into residential rehabilitation, increasing our target from 10 in treatment in 2022/23 to 21 in 2024/25.
- We will develop better working relationships between primary care and treatment services to understand and support those not engaging with structured treatment.
- We will establish a multiagency treatment and recovery group to drive improvements in treatment quality, workforce development and build links with employment and housing teams.
- We will engage with older services users to ensure our treatment services are responsive and adaptable to the needs of an ageing treatment population.

### How will this contribute to achieving the national priorities?

Priority 2 - Deliver a world-class treatment and recovery system.

- Improve quality, capacity and outcomes of commissioned services.
- Rebuild the professional workforce.
- Ensure better integration of services.
- Improve access to accommodation and employment opportunities alongside treatment.

## Priority 6 – Adopting a place-based approach to building recovery into communities.

### What do we know?

Southend Victoria Locality has the highest levels of deprivation across Mid and South Essex, and has a higher rate of hospital admissions for alcohol-attributable conditions than the England average.

Drug-related crimes are consistently higher in Kursaal, Milton, Southchurch and Victoria wards.

We have a strong infrastructure of community-based organisations which can support recovery and further work is needed to improve knowledge and awareness of these initiatives

Those with lived experience have fed back that meaningful activities and community networks are crucial for supporting successful treatment and recovery outcomes

### How will we tackle these challenges?

- We will work with the Voluntary and Community sector and our local alliance to map and build upon local assets and recovery capital in Southend, taking a place approach.
- We will grow our local recovery support by investing time and resource into the development of social networks, peer support, and access to meaningful activities in local communities.
- We will increase public understanding of recovery through the co-production of a public engagement plan, with a focus on creating compassionate communities.
- We will develop a mechanism of ongoing community engagement and feedback to understand and address perceptions of drug related crime and substance misuse.

### How will this contribute to achieving the national priorities?

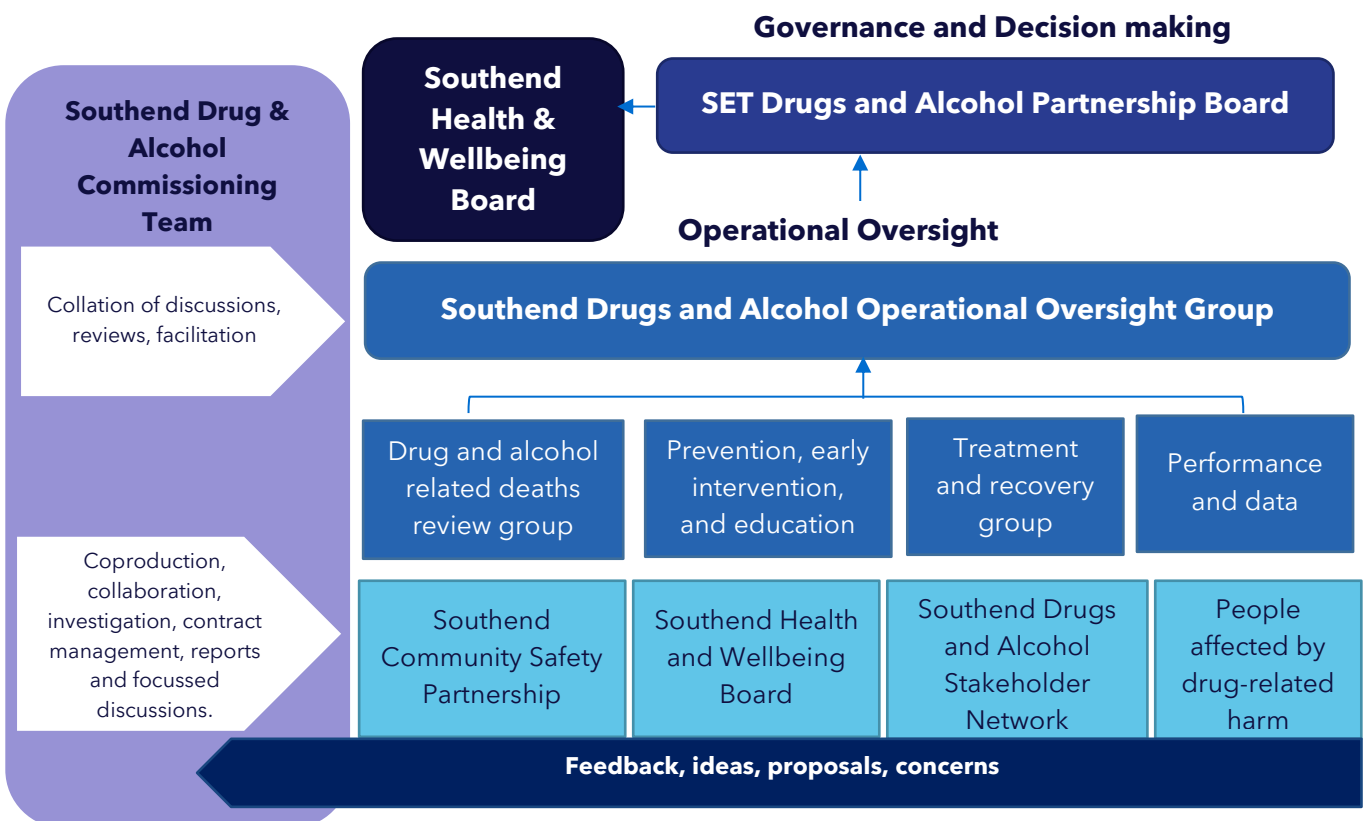
#### Priority 2 - Deliver a world-class treatment and recovery system.

- Improving treatment outcomes.
- Rebuild the professional workforce.
- Ensure better integration of services.
- Improve access to accommodation and employment opportunities alongside treatment.

The drivers of drug use and drug-related harm are complex, and therefore cut across the responsibilities of a range of different organisations<sup>2</sup>. As such, each local authority area is required to establish a local Combating Drugs Partnership which comprises of key representatives from across the local authority, NHS, Jobcentre Plus, substance misuse treatment providers, police, police and crime commissioner, probation, people with lived experience, elected members and secure estate such as prisons and young offender institutions.

In Southend, our partnership is an evolving structure. Due to the geographical cross-over of key services including policing, probation and our integrated care system, we have joined forces with Essex and Thurrock to establish a Joint Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Drug and Alcohol Partnership board. This board will provide strategic oversight of delivery against the national drug strategy, and will be a key vehicle for understanding and addressing shared challenges related to substance misuse across this greater Essex footprint. However, recognising local variation in need, a framework of local governance will be in place to capture and discuss local need and priorities, drive the operational delivery of our SET plans at a local level, and ensure wider partners and networks are engaged and have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery and development of our approach in Southend.

The below outlines the partnership arrangement in Southend as it currently stands:



<sup>2</sup> [Guidance for Local Delivery Partners \(2022\) - Guidance for local delivery partners FINAL.pdf](#)

The national drugs strategy outlines six overarching outcomes that local areas should work towards achieving, as well as some high-level metrics that will be captured at a national level to understand the impact we are having locally:







What we will deliver for citizens (strategic outcomes)	Measured by:
 <b>Reducing drug use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the proportion of the population reporting drug use in the last year (reported by age)</li> <li>prevalence of opiate and/or crack cocaine use</li> </ul>
 <b>Reducing drug-related crime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the number of drug-related homicides</li> <li>the number of neighbourhood crimes</li> </ul>
 <b>Reducing drug-related deaths and harm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>deaths related to drug misuse</li> <li>hospital admissions for drug poisoning and drug-related mental health and behavioural disorders (primary diagnosis of selected drugs)</li> </ul>
What will help us deliver this (intermediate outcomes)	Measured by:
 <b>Reducing drug supply</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the number of county lines closed</li> <li>the number of moderate and major disruptions against organised criminals</li> </ul>
 <b>Increasing engagement in drug treatment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the numbers in treatment (both adults and young people, reported by opiate and crack users, other drugs, and alcohol)</li> <li>continuity of care – engagement with treatment within three weeks of leaving prison</li> </ul>
 <b>Improving drug recovery outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the proportion who are in stable accommodation and who have completed treatment, are drug-free in treatment, or have sustained reduction in drug use</li> </ul> <p><b>Key additional components integral to recovery include housing, mental health, and employment</b></p>

Figure 1. National Combating Drugs Outcomes Framework (2022)

These measures will form the foundations of our understanding of the impact we are having in Southend. Further work will be undertaken in Quarter 1 of 2023/24, in collaboration with our newly established SET partnership board, to develop supplemental local measures which will provide a comprehensive, meaningful understanding of progress, outcomes and achievements.

Demonstrating that we are meeting these objectives locally will be crucial to support the case for future funding at the next spending review.